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Local News

Hundreds flock to Alberta legislature to protest COVID-19 restrictions

Lauren Boothby

Apr 30, 2020 • April 30, 2020 • 3 minute read •  62 Comments

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to protest the Alberta government restrictions during the COVID-19 pandemic. PHOTO BY LARRY WONG /Postmedia

Protesters gathered outside the Alberta legislature Wednesday afternoon, demanding the province lift COVID-19 public health restrictions that forced businesses to close.

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Around 200 attendees raised signs and chanted “End the lockdown,” despite provincial rules carrying fines between \$1,000 and \$100,000 for gatherings of 15 or more. Michael Banner, a spokesperson for End the Lockdown Alberta, which organized the rally, said the province has done a good job of slowing the spread of the coronavirus, but called for a return to earlier rules that limited gatherings to 50 people and let restaurants operate at 50 per cent capacity, and allowed schools to remain open.



“The level lockdown got us to where we are, and I think ... we’ve won that battle ... All the models showing that we’re going to flatten that curve is exactly what we’ve done. And we need to get people back to work,” he said Tuesday.

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In a Monday press conference about COVID-19, Premier Jason Kenney said the province’s “phased” plans to lift some restrictions would be released later this week. His press secretary, Christine Myatt, repeated that information Tuesday, saying in an email the government understands people are frustrated, and “this hasn’t been easy on anyone.”

Lauren Boothby  · Apr 29, 2020



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Small crowd gathers here. They’re spread out but most are definitely not 6 feet apart. [@edmontonjournal](#) [@Edmontonsun](#)

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A man with a blue Trump “Make America Great Again” flag walked in and people cheered. Then they all started cheering: “Trump! Trump! Trump!” [**@edmontonjournal**](#)
[**@Edmontonsun**](#)

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A convoy of vehicles with the group United We Roll honked while driving around the legislature, sporting signs calling to “End the lockdown” as part of the protest.

At the rally, some carried signs saying closures hurt small businesses, that palliative care visits with people who are dying is a human right, and showing support for Alberta’s oil and gas industry. Others outlined conspiracy theories.

A few attendees loudly taunted the police and media who were present. Others cheered for U.S President Donald Trump and slammed Prime Minister Justin Trudeau.

When asked about the size of the gathering, Banner he said he didn’t expect it would be so large.

“I never expected as many people to show up initially, quite honestly. It was more of a, ‘We need to balances against our freedom of speech to get the economy going again,’ ” he said told reporters at the rally.

Lauren Boothby  · Apr 29, 2020



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Organizer says we don’t need anarchists here. Let’s wrap this up soon.

Lauren Boothby 

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Mike, who organized the rally, says police have told them the crowd is getting bigger and they need to disperse. Guessing there’s at least 200 here now. [#yeg](#) [#ableg](#) [@edmontonjournal](#) [@Edmontonsun](#)

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Shortly after it started at 2 p.m., Banner told attendees on a loudspeaker that police had given them 15 minutes to disperse or risk being ticketed. Around half left within that time, and most of the remaining participants were gone by 3 p.m.

One counter-protester booed the event's speakers. David Williamson pointed to comments from Alberta's chief medical officer of health, who said it's not time to re-open.

"It doesn't make sense. It's not safe. You could see in other countries and other jurisdictions where the numbers have skyrocketed. They've had these dumb meetings, they've had rallies and stuff and the leaders have gotten COVID soon after," he told Postmedia.

"A lot of these people who are here are putting their kids in jeopardy. He was talking about opening the parks. It's like, yeah, sure, you want to kill your kid? There's opportunities. Go ahead."

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Over 200 people rallied in front of the Alberta Legislature on Wednesday April 29, 2020 to protest the Alberta government restrictions during the COVID-19 pandemic. PHOTO BY LARRY WONG /POSTMEDIA

A truck belonging to an organizer with United We Roll was temporarily stuck at the entrance to the High Level Bridge on leaving the rally, causing a traffic backup.

Lauren Boothby  · Apr 29, 2020



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Seems like those last warnings worked. Think there's about 15 people left, all spread out.

Lauren Boothby 

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Ok one of the protest leaders, from United We Roll, has a fire truck and got stuck under the access point to the High Level Bridge causing a backup. [@Edmontonsun](#)
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Hinshaw responds

At her daily update, Alberta's chief medical officer of health Dr. Deena Hinshaw said it makes sense to wonder when things will get back to normal.

But she said it's important that people remember that restrictions are the reason Alberta has avoided a surge in the number of people requiring hospitalization.

“The concern that I have is that if we (re-open) too quickly, those earlier models can still come true. We haven’t escaped the threat of the virus, we have simply, by all of our collective work, prevented rapid spread,” she said Tuesday.

Alberta Health Services estimates one or two out of 100 people with COVID-19 will die, compared to about one in 1,000 people with influenza. About 20 per cent of people with COVID-19 will need treatment.

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There is no vaccine available for COVID-19.

lboothby@postmedia.com

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Editor’s note: This story has been changed to clarify that not all of the 20 per cent who are infected with COVID-19 require hospitalization.

What’s your COVID story? How have you been dealing with the sudden change in daily life following the outbreak? We want to hear from you — at home, at work, behind the lines. Contact us at edm-feedback@postmedia.com

Get a roundup of the latest COVID-19 information and analysis with our daily newsletters from the [Edmonton Journal](#) and the [Edmonton Sun](#). Every day at 7 p.m., we’ll send you a recap of the day’s top stories and features to help you make sense of the ever-changing crisis.

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